

**THE BLESSING
OF
SISTER ANNE CLARKE
AS ABBESS OF
SAINT MARY'S ABBEY
BY
THE RIGHT REV'D BISHOP LAURIE GREEN
VISITOR OF THE COMMUNITY
ON
NOVEMBER 7TH
2020**

*Saint Mary's Abbey
West Malling
Kent*

The earliest rite for the blessing of an abbess was very simple, but gradually it became more elaborate. Avicia, the first abbess of Malling, was given the pastoral staff by Bishop Gundulf as he lay dying in the monk's infirmary at Rochester. It is not until the fourteenth century registers of Bishop Hamo de Hethe that we have a detailed account of the election and blessing of an abbess at Malling. Today the rite is again very simple. The text of the questioning and blessing are based on the chapters of the Rule of Saint Benedict in which he sets out the duties of the office and the qualities it demands.

Please sit or stand during the service as you feel able. For reason of Covid security please do not join in with the singing.

The service is being filmed for those who cannot attend today and will be made available on our website.

THE EUCHARIST

Gloria in excelsis

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to his people.
We praise you, we bless you, we worship you, we glorify you.
God of great glory, we give you thanks.
Lord God, heavenly King, the Father, the Almighty.
Lord Jesus Christ, only-begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God,
Son of the Father.
You take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.
You take away the sin of the world; receive our prayer.
You are seated at the right hand of the Father; have mercy on us.
For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord.
You alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in
the glory of the Father. Amen.

Collect

God our Father, Lord of all the world, we thank you that through your Son Jesus Christ you have called us into the fellowship of your universal Church. Hear our prayer for your faithful people, that each of us in our vocation and ministry may be an instrument of your love, and give to your servant Anne, now to be blessed, the needful gifts of grace; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever.

Amen.

A reading from the Book of Joshua

“ I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous; for you shall put this people in possession of the land that I swore to their ancestors to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to act in accordance with all the law that my servant Moses commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, so that you may be successful wherever you go.

This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful. I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”

Joshua 1: 5b - 9

Gradual

How precious is your steadfast love, O God! The children of men take refuge in the shadow of your wings.

With you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light.

They feast on the abundance of your house, and you give them drink from the river of your delights.

With you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light.

O continue your steadfast love to those who know you, and your salvation to the upright of heart.

With you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light.

A Reading from the second letter of Paul to the Corinthians

The love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them. From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.

2 Corinthians 5:14-19

Alleluia chant

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold the new has come.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

We, though many, are one body in Christ, and members one of another.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

A reading from the Gospel according to Saint Luke

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.” And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.”

Luke 10: 25-28

The Homily – given by the Visitor

The Litany of Intercession

℣. In peace let us pray to the Lord.

℟. Lord have mercy.

1. For the peace of the whole world, for the good estate of the holy Churches of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

℟. Lord have mercy.

2. For Justin our Archbishop, James our Bishop, Laurie our Visitor, and for all who minister in the Church of God, let us pray to the Lord.

℟. Lord have mercy.

3. For Pope Francis, for the patriarchs of the Orthodox Churches, the leaders of the Reformed Churches, and for all our brothers and sisters in Christ, let us pray to the Lord.

℟. Lord have mercy.

4. For Jews, Muslims and those of other faiths, let us pray to the Lord.

℟. Lord have mercy.

5. For all engaged in the missionary work of the Church, let us pray to the Lord.
 R̄ Lord have mercy.
 6. For the persecuted and their persecutors, let us pray to the Lord.
 R̄ Lord have mercy.
 7. For the Church suffering under oppressive regimes, let us pray to the Lord.
 R̄ Lord have mercy.
 8. For ... (*special intentions*), let us pray to the Lord.
 R̄ Lord have mercy.
 9. For Elizabeth our Queen and all the royal family, and for the leaders of the nations of the world, let us pray to the Lord.
 R̄ Lord have mercy.
 10. For ... (*Special intentions*), let us pray to the Lord.
 R̄ Lord have mercy.
- For the needs of the world which lie closest to our hearts:
pause ..., Let us pray to the Lord.
11. For those who seek God but cannot yet name him, for the indifferent and those who reject him, let us pray to the Lord.
 R̄ Lord have mercy.
 12. For all who travel by land, by water and by air, for the sick, the suffering and the dying, for those in special need and for the salvation of all, let us pray to the Lord.
 R̄ Lord have mercy.
 13. For the departed, especially the members of our community, our kinsfolk and benefactors, and for ... (*special names*), let us pray to the Lord.
 R̄ Lord have mercy.

℣. Let us pray that the whole day may be perfect, holy, peaceful and sinless, and let us commend ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God.

℟. To you, O Lord.

℣. Almighty God, you have given us grace with one accord to make our common supplications to you, † and have promised that when two or three are gathered together in your name you will grant their requests: * fulfil now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of your servants as may be most expedient for them; granting us in this world knowledge of your truth, and in the world to come life everlasting. For you are gracious, O God, lover of all, and we give glory to you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and for ever.

℟. Amen.

After the litany we will sing the following hymn.

HYMN

O King enthroned on high,
Thou comforter divine,
Blest Spirit of all truth, be nigh
And make us thine.

Thou art the source of life,
Thou art our treasure store;
Give us thy peace, and end our strife
For evermore.

Descend, O heavenly Dove,
Abide with us always;
And in the fulness of thy love
Cleanse us, we pray.

THE RITE OF BLESSING

A chair is placed in front of the altar for the Visitor who sits.

All face the altar.

The abbess-elect is presented to the Visitor:

She kneels and remains kneeling until after the anointing.

Abbess Emerita: Reverend Father-in-God, in the name of the community, I present to you Sister Anne whom we have duly elected to be the abbess of our monastic family.

Visitor: Dear Sisters, you have chosen Sister Anne to guide you as the representative of Christ. Will you now receive her ?

The Community: Yes, we willingly receive her and ask you to bless her as the abbess of our monastery of the blessed Virgin Mary.

Visitor: Dear Sister, according to the custom handed down from ancient times, allow me to question you as you commit yourself before God and all here present to the loving service of this community.

Will you be faithful in your resolve to observe the Rule of Saint Benedict, in teaching your sisters to do the same and in leading them, by the path of the Gospel, to the love of God and mutual charity?

Abbess-elect: With the help of God, I will.

Visitor: Will you guide your sisters in their search for God, teaching them more by your life and example than by words ?

Abbess-elect: With the help of God, I will.

Visitor: Will you encourage your sisters to be faithful to the tradition of this monastery, begun by blessed Gundulf and continued by your predecessors ? Will you especially foster the life of prayer in this place that by its hidden power God's Kingdom may be extended ?

Abbess-elect: With the help of God, I will.

Visitor: Will you be obedient and loyal to the Church and in particular to the bishop of this diocese of Rochester ?

Abbess-elect: With the help of God, I will.

The Visitor stands.

Visitor: May the Lord strengthen your resolve, give you every grace and keep you always and everywhere under his protection.

Let us pray that God will uphold his servant Anne whom he has chosen to serve him as abbess of this community.

After a short pause the Visitor begins the prayer of blessing with hands outstretched.

THE PRAYER OF BLESSING

Almighty Father,
you sent your only Son into the world
to be the servant of all,
and as the Good Shepherd
to lay down his life for the sheep:
Bless and strengthen your servant Anne,
chosen to be abbess of this monastery.
Give her gentleness and humility,
and loving concern for her sisters.
May she strive to be loved rather than feared
and so fulfil her office as Mother Abbess.
Teach her that to be first among her sisters
is to be first in serving them.
Under her leadership and guidance
may they run joyfully
in the way of God's commandments,
united in the love of Christ and of one another,

The Visitor places his hands on the head of the abbess

Send down your Holy Spirit for the Office and Work
of Abbess in this community.
Give her wisdom and discernment,
increase of faith and knowledge of the truth.
Set her on fire with your love,
so that she may kindle the same fire
in the heart of her sisters.
May she prefer nothing to Christ
and in the day of his coming
may he bring her with all her sisters into his presence
to give glory, honour and praise to you for ever.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

THE ANOINTING

The Visitor anoints the abbess with the oil of chrism on the forehead and the hands, saying

May God who anointed his Christ
with the Holy Spirit
anoint and empower you
to stand among his people
to serve them as Christ himself,
to bless them in his name,
and to lead them with wisdom and insight;
that peace may abound
and righteousness flourish
now and to the end of the ages.

Amen.

THE GIVING OF THE INSIGNIA

All sit for the giving of the Rule, cross and crozier.

The giving of the Rule

A Reading from the Rule of Saint Benedict

Read by a Benedictine.

The purpose for which we have written this Rule is to make it clear that by observing it in our monasteries we can at least achieve the first steps in virtue and good monastic practice. Anyone, however, who wishes to press on towards the highest standards of monastic life may turn to the teachings of the holy Fathers, which can lead those who follow them to the very heights of perfection. ... Be faithful with Christ's help to this small Rule which is only a beginning. Starting from there you may in the end aim at the greater heights of monastic teaching and virtue in the works which we have mentioned above and with God's help you will then be able to reach those heights yourself. Amen.

From Chapter 73

The abbess kneels before the Visitor.

The Visitor gives the abbess the Rule, saying:

Receive this Rule which has been the guide to many who have gone before you. By it lead and strengthen those committed to your care in this school of the Lord's service.

The giving of the cross

A reading from the Rule of Saint Benedict

Read by the Sub-Prioress.

As we progress in this monastic way of life and in faith, our hearts will warm to its vision and with eager love and delight that defies expression we shall go forward on the way of God's commandments. Then we shall never think of deserting his guidance; we shall persevere in fidelity to his teaching in the monastery until death so that through our patience we may be granted some part in Christ's own passion and thus in the end receive a share in his kingdom. Amen.

From the Prologue

The abbess kneels before the Visitor.

He gives the cross, saying:

Receive this cross as a sign that you hold the place of Christ, that sharing by patience in his sufferings you may deserve to be a partaker of his Kingdom.

The giving of the crozier

A reading from the Rule of Saint Benedict

Read by Abbess Emerita

Reflection on their own high status in the monastery and the meaning of their title should be ever present to the abbot or abbess. This will make them aware of what is meant by the saying that more is demanded of those to whom more is entrusted. They should reflect on what a difficult and demanding task they have accepted, namely that of guiding souls and serving the needs of so many different characters; gentle encouragement will be needed for one, strong rebukes for another, rational persuasion for another, according to the character and intelligence of each. It is the task of the superiors to adapt with sympathetic understanding to the needs of each so that they may not only avoid any loss but even have the joy of increasing the number of good sheep in the flock committed to them.

From Chapter 2

The Visitor and the abbess stand.

He gives the crozier, saying:

Receive this pastoral staff as a sign of your office; may you imitate the example of the Good Shepherd by your loving care for all those entrusted to you.

All stand.

Visitor: Fulfil your work in us, O Lord, and grant our prayer, for you have said, “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.”

All: Amen.

The abbess turns to stand beside the Visitor for the Presentation.

THE PRESENTATION

The Visitor addresses the Community.

Sisters, I present to you Mother Anne as your Abbess. Will you accept her authority, and support and encourage her with your love and prayer ?

Community: We will.

The Visitor addresses the Oblates of the Monastery.

As a representative of the Oblates of the Community who live under promise according to the spirit of the Rule, will you recognise the authority now invested in Mother Anne as you follow the way of Benedict?

Oblate: We will.

The Visitor addresses the congregation.

Dear friends in Christ, I commend to you our Mother Anne as the new Abbess of this monastery. Will you uphold her and the Community in your prayers ?

All: We will

THE INSTALLATION

The Visitor conducts the abbess to her stall, she sits, they exchange a mutual bow.

The Visitor and assistant return to the sanctuary.

All sit for a time of silent prayer.

When the abbess stands all stand but remain in their places through out.

President: The peace of the Lord be always with you.

People: And with your spirit.

The Peace is exchanged with a smile and a bow

the President moves to the altar.

President: Blessed are you, * O Lord God, for ever and ever. All that is in heaven and on earth is yours, and of your own do we give to you. Amen.

President: The Lord is with you.

People: And with your spirit.

President: Lift up your hearts.

People: We have them lifted up to the Lord.

President: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: He is worthy of all thanksgiving and praise.

You are worthy in truth, O holy Lord, Father Almighty, that we should at all times and in every place give thanks to you, for with your only-begotten Son and life-giving Spirit you are the one true God from everlasting to everlasting, immortal, ineffable, whose glory fills heaven and earth, and who out of nothing created all things through your Word, making man and woman in your own image and likeness; and after they had sinned you did not destroy nor forsake them, but in your love made with them a covenant of mercy, giving them the law and instructing them by the prophets.

And when the fullness of time was come, you sent your only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and by the overshadowing of your life-giving Spirit to be born of a pure virgin; and to become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, that he might break the power of evil and set us free from sin and death. And we pray you, O Father, with your Holy Spirit and word, bless and sanctify these gifts that they may be for us the

body and blood of Jesus Christ our Lord, who having in all things fulfilled your holy will, in the same night in which he was betrayed took bread, and giving thanks to you, broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take, eat, this is my body which is for you. Likewise also the cup, saying: Drink of it, for this is the new covenant in my blood; do this for the remembrance of me.

Wherefore, O holy Father, making this remembrance before you, and recalling all that for our sakes was brought to pass by your Son Jesus Christ, his saving passion and death, his mighty resurrection and ascension, his sitting at your right hand and his sending of the Spirit, and looking for his coming again in power and great glory, we offer to you your own of your own, from all and for all, the holy bread of eternal life and the cup of everlasting salvation. And we do this in communion with all your faithful people, with blessed Mary, Mother of God, the patriarchs and prophets, your holy apostles and martyrs, (your servant . . .) together with all your saints, and with those who have fallen asleep in the sign of faith and rest in the peace of Christ.

And we pray you, O Father, that all we who partake of the most holy Body and Blood of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord may obtain remission of our sins, and with your whole Church be gathered into one and filled with your grace and heavenly benediction.

And we give thanks to you that by your Holy Spirit you make us a royal priesthood, a holy people worthy to stand and minister before you. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, by whom and with whom and in whom we glorify your holy name with angels, archangels, cherubim and seraphim, and all the heavenly host, evermore praising you and singing the triumphal song:

Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God almighty, who was and is and is to come, to him be glory for ever and ever Amen.

All bow for a space,

President: As our Saviour Christ has commanded and taught us, we are bold to say:

President and people:

Father, hallowed be your name; your kingdom come, your will be done as in heaven so on earth.

Give us today our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

The President says:

∞ Holy things for the holy people of God.

℞ One is holy, One is Lord, Jesus Christ to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

President: The Bread of heaven in Christ Jesus.

℞ Amen.

The President first receives Communion.

Mother Abbess goes to the altar to receive the second paten and then communicates the sisters whilst the president communicates the assistant and the guests.

Returning to the altar he holds up the chalice and says:

President: The Blood of Christ, the cup of life.

℞ Amen.

He receives from the chalice.

The sacred vessels are taken to the credence.

The President then joins the people in sitting for a period of silent prayer. After which all stand for the thanksgiving chant.

Thanksgiving chant

Alleluia. To God be glory in the Church and in Christ
Jesus for ever and ever, Amen.

The community will sing the following hymn

OFFICE HYMN FOR THE DEDICATION OF THE ABBEY CHURCH

Within your house of prayer,
O living God, your people stand,
Ourselves the temple of the Spirit
And the place of your indwelling; Alleluia.

Here for our cornerstone,
Foundation, head, the Christ is set;
And we in him shaped, hewed, cemented,
Each with each are joined for ever; alleluia.

O ever-present Lord.
Unceasing praise shall here ascend;
Where Christ is to his own imparted,
Bread of life and hope of glory; alleluia.

President: Go forth in the peace of Christ.

All: Alleluia.

